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STATE FOR NA/MAG FOR MAYA HARRIS, EB/TPP, EB/CBA  
STATE PLEAS PASS TO USTR FOR SHAUN DONNELLY AND DOUG BELL  
DC FOR NATHANIEL MASON, CHRISTOPHER JAMES, AND AMY ABINE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EFINTS](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL WITH MINITER OF  
DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**¶1.** (U) Summary: Ambassador Hudson paid a farewell call on Minister of Development and International Cooperation (MDIC) Mohamed Nouri Jouini on Jun 20, 2006. The Ambassador delivered a letter from USTR concerning a proposed June 30, 2006 meeting between the minister and AUSTR Donnelly (SEPTEL. The discussion centered on the investment climate, the economy, and the important role that the ministry plays in the economic future of Tunisia. End Summary.

**¶2.** (U) The Ambassador met with Minister of Development and International Cooperation Mohamed Nouri Jouini on June 20, 2006. The Ambassador expressed his appreciation for the quality of cooperation that he has received during his tenure in Tunisia. He indicated that Tunisia had made progress on TRIPS compliance and that it was not listed on this year's Special 301 list because the MDIC and the Ministry of Public Health took the issue of IPR seriously. The Ambassador also noted that he sensed a more positive American attitude towards investment in Tunisia. This is largely due to the efforts of MDIC and of The Foreign Investment Promotion Agency (L'agence de Promotion des Investissements Exterieur, FIPA). The Ambassador indicated that FIPA has been a very effective and supportive organization. Ambassador stated that MDIC is key for U.S. investment in Tunisia and key for Tunisia's economic future.

**¶4.** (SBU) The Ambassador applauded the GOT's interest in promoting higher technology investments. In this vein, the Ambassador inquired about a recent meeting with a major US high tech company interested in making a sizable investment in Tunisia. The Ambassador indicated that this was a new level of high technology and that the investment would be the first of its kind in the Maghreb region. The Ambassador indicated that if this deal goes through it would be a good signal for other U.S. investors. He indicated that success stories are good for Tunisia as they tend to spread the word on its investment climate. The minister responded that the meeting had gone well and that the GOT was very interested in the proposal. The minister indicated that FIPA and MDIC would be working with this investor to come up with appropriate programs and incentives to close the deal. The minister also said that this investment would be a new type of partnership but that it fit in well with the GOT's policy to generate new investments and economic progress. The minister stated that he felt this venture could be the beginning of a new trend for U.S. investment in Tunisia.

**¶5.** (U) Minister Jouini thanked the Ambassador for building a cooperative relationship with the GOT and for his commitment

to maintaining an open dialogue which helped strengthen our relationship. The minister said that it is important for governments to dialogue in order to make progress. He hoped that this open dialogue would continue with the Ambassador's successor. The minister said that MDIC works as a team and that they are aware of the challenges ahead for Tunisia (employment issues, growth conditions, economic and demography changes). He knows that the next 10 years are critical ones for the GOT. The GOT is a developing country and it knows what it can do and what it cannot do. The minister indicated that the pressure on GOT is high and so it must make the necessary changes to meet the challenges it faces. According to the minister research and education needs to accept constant change in order to keep pace with the ever changing technology. The minister indicated that the GOT will be focusing on the need for transfer of knowledge and technology in order to meet future challenges.

¶ 16. (U) The minister said that the GOT is on the right path and that he is satisfied with the continuous dialogue he has had with investors. He stressed that he felt there was a need to get the Tunisian private sector more involved in this dialogue and to get the business community working with the GOT to make the positive message about doing business in Tunisia more credible. The minister said that the GOT needs to fine tune its economic reform efforts by paying attention to the details.

¶ 17. (SBU) Comment: Due to the GOT's overweening desire for control, Jouini and his ministry are occasionally dealt a difficult hand in promoting investment and trade relationships. They are, however, the most professional, progressive, and responsive actors in the GOT, and, arguably, Tunisian trade and investment. End comment.

BALLARD